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MEMORANDUM

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION

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April 12, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER
FROM: RICHARD H. SOLOMON *DHS*
SUBJECT: Political Background Analysis of Teng Hsiao-p'ing

In assigning recently rehabilitated Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing the role of leader of the Chinese delegation to the UN special session, the Chinese clearly hope to signal the importance they currently attach to economic issues involving the "have-not" nations and to build themselves up as a leader of the Third World. Teng is a full member of the Politburo and as such is the highest-ranking Chinese to have participated in a UN debate. Teng's assignment also has important domestic political implications, which are noted below.

We have rather reliable evidence that Teng has been instructed to take the temperature of the Sino-U.S. relationship while in New York. According to a Chinese diplomat in Tokyo, his principal mission is to represent Chou En-lai in discussions with U.S. leaders on "all issues" affecting the relationship. This official claims that Teng specifically will ask Washington to clarify its position with respect to Taiwan, and to explain the rationale for the appointment of Ambassador Unger to Taipei. Although the diplomat spoke of "negotiations," Teng is likely to engage primarily in exploratory discussions rather than formal negotiations. Teng may also offer some explanation of the current political state of affairs in Peking -- at least as seen from Chou's point of view -- although this task could be left to Vice Foreign Minister Ch'iao Kuan-hua.

Teng may also attempt to assess the U.S. domestic political scene, obviously with an eye to how the President's political troubles will impact on the durability and utility of the current relationship. The diplomat claims that the Chinese leadership will hold an overall review of Sino-U.S. relations upon Teng's return to China, and that the question of whether or not Ambassador Huang Chen remains permanently at his post will depend upon the results of Teng's visit.

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Symbolically, Teng's assignment has major implications for Chinese domestic politics, rather than for international affairs. For nearly a decade he has been one of the most controversial figures in China, and there are a host of indicators suggesting that he remains a bone of political contention. Teng was the second most important official to be purged in the Cultural Revolution and one of the first to fall when that movement heated up in the summer of 1966. For three years he was excoriated daily in the Red Guard press, although he was never attacked by name in official publications. As the former Secretary-General of the Party, he is the living embodiment of the "bad old days" when the entrenched Party bureaucracy ran roughshod over younger or more radically inclined party members. These people had their moment in the sun while the Cultural Revolution was in progress and now presumably are not pleased by Teng's political reactivation. As a "rehabilitated" party veteran he also poses a symbolic threat to military figures who usurped important Party positions toward the close of the Cultural Revolution.

Both the military and younger radical cadre probably opposed Teng's return to active politics. Chiang Ching publicly snubbed him when he first reappeared a year ago, and until fairly recently she has tended to avoid appearing with him in public. Teng was elected to the central committee - but not to the Politburo - at the 10th party congress, a development which in the light of subsequent events strongly suggests that opposition to his "rehabilitation" had not evaporated at that time. Elevation to the Politburo required the personal intervention of Chairman Mao last December - an act that in fact violated normal Party procedures. In the process of reactivating him to an important political role, the Chairman offered Teng an apology for the treatment he received during the Cultural Revolution - an unprecedented move that although it has not been made public is nevertheless known by virtually all Party members. Mao's own prestige is thus tightly bound up with Teng's return to high-level politics.

These extraordinary signs of Mao's personal involvement in Teng's return to a leadership position have not, however, entirely stilled criticism. The idea of "restoration" of officials purged in the Cultural Revolution continues to be attacked in official and unofficial propaganda, and it is most unlikely that Teng is exempted from these generalized condemnations. Even more startling, a recent article in the Party's theoretical journal, using a historical analogy, held up to ridicule a "foolish emperor" who authorized the condemnation and jailing of a leading advisor but who later attempted to restore him to power. While it is hard to see who could hope to benefit

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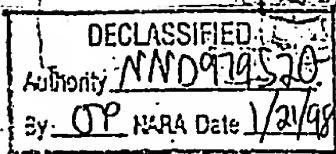
by a direct attack on the Chairman, it is harder still to believe that a large number of people in China may not see in this parable a reflection of the Mao-Teng relationship.

A further complicating factor in Teng's return to official favor is his relationship with the military. The decision to elevate him to the Politburo was apparently taken at the same time that the reshuffle of the powerful military regional commanders was finally approved. This move was also contemplated at the time of the 10th Party Congress, and was apparently shelved because of opposition that evidently was overcome only through patient and persistent maneuvering on the part of Mao and Chou throughout the autumn. Teng in fact is now a member of the powerful Military Affairs Commission of the Party, the body overseeing defense matters - again as the result of Mao's personal intervention. He is clearly slated for a very high formal military post - although he is a civilian - and he is likely to be entrusted with the task of disciplining the armed forces as they are forced out of the political arena. From nearly all points of view, the military is likely to find this situation unpalatable.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s Teng, in his capacity as leading Party bureaucrat, ran afoul of Chou En-lai, who commanded the government apparatus. Chou was therefore probably not displeased to observe Teng's disgrace in 1966. The excesses of Cultural Revolution leftists, however, quickly led Chou into common cause with the crippled Party bureaucracy, and he has been closely identified with the movement to "rehabilitate" leading Party officials over the past two years. In fact, Teng's initial return to public activity a year ago was universally attributed within China to Chou's personal initiative. This reading is almost certainly correct. Chou has been arguing that given China's economic backwardness and military weakness, it needs to make full use of experienced administrators of Teng's caliber. Chou was, moreover, apparently the author of a directive calling for the "rehabilitation" of Teng and other purged officials which circulated in China in early 1973.

Any lingering suspicion that the Chairman might have elevated Teng to the Politburo as a "counterweight" to the Premier and as a means of circumscribing Chou's power would seem to have been laid to rest in the course of Teng's recent meeting with an Australian scientific delegation late last month. In the course of this meeting, Teng sounded more "Chouist" than the Premier himself, stressing the importance to China of scientific exchanges, reiterating that China was a poor and developing country that needed to learn from

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Australia and urging his visitors to see the backward side of Chinese life as well as China's socialist achievements. Teng's speech in New York on April 10 also echoed moderate Chouist themes.

In fact, the choice of Teng to lead the Chinese delegation was almost certainly designed to emphasize the continuing strength of the Premier in the course of current political maneuvering in Peking. Given Chou's identification with the "rehabilitation" program, his prestige, with that of the Chairman, seems tied to Teng's political fortunes. Although Teng is clearly not so intimate a personal associate of Chou as is Ch'iao Kuan-hua, he seems at present to be a dependable political ally. The Chinese diplomat in Tokyo is almost certainly right in considering Teng a personal representative of Chou during his sojourn in New York.

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A standard CIA biographical sketch of Teng Hsiao-p'ing's political career is attached.